

Message Text

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11

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SCCT-01 IO-10 DHA-02 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /077 W

----- 079498

P 041403Z AUG 75

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3484

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO PRIORITY

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON PRIORITY

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC PRIORITY

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN PRIORITY

COMIDEASTFOR PRIORITY

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA PRIORITY

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI PRIORITY

CNO WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0663

E.O. 11652: GFS

TAGS: PINS ET

SUBJECT: INSURGENT RAID RESULTS IN EPMG REPRISALS

REF: A. NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA 021728Z AUG 75

B. NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA 021820Z AUG 75

C. NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA 021920Z AUG 75 AND SUBSEQUENT

1. AFTER WEEK OF UNUSUAL QUIET WHICH WAS UNMARRED BY ASSASSINATIONS, REPRISALS, OR EVEN DISCERNIBLE MILITARY ACTION IN THE SURROUNDING AREA, CALM WAS SHATTERED EARLY SATURDAY EVENING BY NOISY FIREFIGHT. SMALL GROUPS OF GUNMEN FIRED INTO EPMG MILITARY INSTALLATIONS AT SEVERAL DIFFERENT POINTS THROUGHOUT ASMARA (INCLUDING EPMG-OCCUPIED KAGNEW TRACTS A, B AND PORTION OF E). THERE WERE NO U.S. CASUALTIES AND NO DAMAGE WAS REPORTED TO U.S. FACILITIES. THE RAIDS WERE
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PRIMARILY HARASSMENT AND APPARENTLY INFLICTED LITTLE OR NO

CASUALTIES ON EPMG TROOPS.

2. FIRING BEGAN ABOUT 8:00 PM, WITH THE LAST INCOMING ROUNDS FIRED ABOUT 9/30 PM. HEAVIEST FIRING WAS IN AREA AROUND FORMER EXPO SITE, NOW FIRST DIVISION HDQS., WHICH HAS BECOME INFAMOUS LOCALLY AS EPMG INTERROGATION AND DETENTION CENTER. AT ABOUT 10:00 PM EPMG TROOPS BEGAN HEAVILY ARMED, MECHANIZED PATROLS OF AREAS OF HEAVY FIRING. IN ONE AREA SOUTH OF TOWN (VILLUVE OF GAGGIRET), EPMG TROOPS OF 35TH BRIGADE REPORTEDLY BROKE INTO SEVERAL HOMES AND SUMMARILY EXECUTED OCCUPANTS. IT IS WIDELY REPORTED THAT IN ONE INCIDENT ENTIRE FAMILY, INCLUDING YOUNG CHILDREN, PETS AND LIVESTOCK, WERE SHOT. TOTAL OF 22 ALLEGED TO HAVE BEEN KILLED. IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD EAST OF TRACT A, EPMG TROOPS WERE SOMEWHAT MORE RESTRAINED, WITH THEIR REPRISALS BEING LIMITED TO LOOTING AND GENERAL HARASSMENT OF RESIDENTS.

3. AT 8:00 AM SUNDAY MORNING RESIDENTS OF GAGGIRET MARCHED ON THE GOVERNMENT TO PROTEST ACTIONS OF EPMG TROOPS. UNDOUBTEDLY SPURRED BY SUCCESS OF SIMILAR DEMONSTRATION EIGHT DAYS BEFORE WHICH RESULTED IN CESSATION OF EPMG RANDOM MASSACRE OF YOUNG MALE ASMARA RESIDENTS, DEMONSTRATORS AGAIN BOLDLY CHALLENGED MILITARY LEADERS TO JUSTIFY ACTIONS OF EPMG FORCES. REPORTEDLY, BG GETACHEW NADEW, MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR, SPOKE WITH PROTESTERS AND LATER EITHER HE OR BG WORKU MAKKONEN, COMMANDER EPMG TROOPS IN ERITREA, REPORTEDLY VISITED NEIGHBORHOOD IN QUESTION, WAS SHOWN MUTILATED BODIES OF VICTIMS AND DISPLAYED OUTRAGE AT SUCH ACTIONS, AND SAID HE HAD NOT AND WOULD NOT CONDONE SUCH VICIOUS, SENSELESS REPRISALS, IMPLYING HE WOULD INVESTIGATE INCIDENT.

4. COMMENT: CONGEN CONSIDERS IT MOST PROBABLE THAT FIREFIGHT WAS INITIATED BY INSURGENT SQUADS REACTING TO COERCION USED BY EPMG IN STIMULATING "SPONTANEOUS" DEMONSTRATION SATURDAY MORNING IN SUPPORT OF URBAN LAND REFORM PROCLAMATION. DEMONSTRATION WAS THIN SHAM AS ABOUT 2,000 SULLEN GOVERNMENT AND OFFICE WORKERS PLODDED MECHANICALLY THROUGH PREARRANGED RITUAL. FURTHER FACTOR IS INSURGENT DESIRE TO DEMONSTRATE CONTINUED ABILITY TO PENETRATE TO ANY POINT WITH ASMARA AND THREATEN THE SECURITY OF EPMG FORCES. DESPITE PROBABILITY THAT INSURGENTS ROUCHED OFF SATURDAY

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NIGHT'S FIRING, IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED IN ASMARA THAT THEY WERE UNINVOLVED AND THAT SHOOTING WAS "STAGED" BY EPMG FORCES TO PERMIT LOOTING. NO MATTER WHO BEGAN INCIDENT, WIDE BELIEF THAT INSURGENTS UNINVOLVED IS PSYCHOLOGICAL VICTORY FOR "FRONT" (ELF/PLF), AS IT THEN ABSOLVED FROM GUILT FOR BLOODY REPRISAL. FURTHER INTERESTING FACET OF INCIDENT IS WILLINGNESS OF ASMARA RESIDENTS TO APPEAL DIRECTLY TO HIGHEST EPMG MILITARY OFFICIALS TO PREVENT RECURRENCE OF ATROCITIES. SUCH APPEALS BY GROUPS OF DEMONSTRATORS WOULD

SEEM RISKY, BUT SUCCESS OF FIRST EFFORT ENCOURAGED RESIDENTS TO
EMPLOY THIS NEW MODUS VIVENDI IN ATTAINING RELIEF FROM EPMG
VIOLENCE.
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